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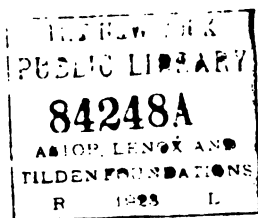
POESY.



HEROINES OF THE POETS.

DRAWINGS BY
FERNAND LYNGREN.

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BOSTON.



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NOV 21 1886

CONTENTS.

AURORA LEIGH.	<i>Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning.</i>	. 17
GERAINT AND ENID.	<i>Alfred Tennyson.</i>	. . . 37
BALAUSTION'S ADVENTURE.	<i>Robert Browning.</i>	. . . 53
HIGHLAND MARY.	<i>Robert Burns.</i> 67
- THE EVE OF ST. AGNES.	<i>John Keats.</i> 73
✓ LOVE.	<i>Samuel Taylor Colcridge.</i> 93
- LUCY.	<i>William Wordsworth.</i> 103
✓ THE LADY OF THE LAKE.	<i>Walter Scott.</i> 111
✓ CORINNA'S GOING A MAYING.	<i>Robert Herrick.</i> 131
✓ KING LEAR.	<i>William Shakespeare.</i> 139
✓ THE FAERY QUEEN.	<i>Edmund Spenser.</i> 163
✓ GRISELDA.	<i>Geoffrey Chaucer.</i> 171



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

FRONTISPIECE.	2
VIGNETTE.	9
MRS. BROWNING'S AURORA LEIGH.	15
TENNYSON'S ENID.	35
ROBERT BROWNING'S BALAUSTION.	51
BURNS' HIGHLAND MARY.. . . .	65
KEATS' MADELINE.	71
COLERIDGE'S GENEVIEVE.	91
WORDSWORTH'S LUCY.	101
SCOTT'S ELLEN.	109
HERRICK'S CORINNA.	129
SHAKESPEARE'S CORDELIA.	137
SPENSER'S UNA.	161
CHAUCEER'S GRISELDA.	169
VIGNETTE.	183





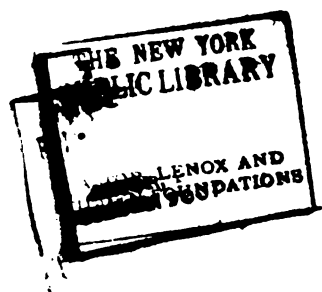
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HEROINES OF THE POETS





MRS. BROWNING'S AURORA LEIGH

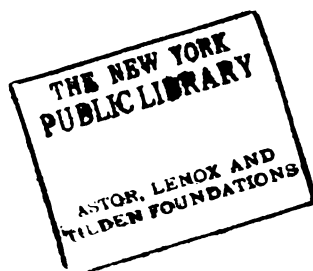
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MRS. BROWNING'S AURORA LEIGH.



AURORA LEIGH.

BOOK SECOND.

TIMES followed one another. Came a morn
I stood upon the brink of twenty years,
And looked before and after, as I stood
Woman and artist,—either incomplete,
Both credulous of completion. There I held
The whole creation in my little cup,
And smiled with thirsty lips before I drank
'Good health to you and me, sweet neighbour mine,
And all these peoples.'

I was glad, that day ;
The June was in me, with its multitudes
Of nightingales all singing in the dark,
And rosebuds reddening where the calyx split.
I felt so young, so strong, so sure of God !
So glad, I could not choose be very wise !
And, old at twenty, was inclined to pull
My childhood backward in a childish jest
To see the face of't once more, and farewell !
In which fantastic mood I bounded forth

At early morning,— would not wait so long
As even to snatch my bonnet by the strings,
But, brushing a green trail across the lawn
With my gown in the dew, took will and way
Among the acacias of the shrubberies,
To fly my fancies in the open air
And keep my birthday, till my aunt awoke
To stop good dreams. Meanwhile I murmured on
As honeyed bees keep humming to themselves;
' The worthiest poets have remained uncrowned
Till death has bleached their foreheads to the bone,
And so with me it must be, unless I prove
Unworthy of the grand adversity,
And certainly I would not fail so much.
What, therefore, if I crown myself to-day
In sport, not pride, to learn the feel of it,
Before my brows be numbed as Dante's own
To all the tender pricking of such leaves?
Such leaves ! what leaves ?

I pulled the branches down,
To choose from.

' Not the bay ! I choose no bay ;
The fates deny us if we are overbold :
Nor myrtle — which means chiefly love ; and love
Is something awful which one dares not touch
So early o' mornings. This verbena strains
The point of passionate fragrance ; and hard by,
This guelder rose, at far too slight a beck
Of the wind, will toss about her flower-apples.

Ah — there's my choice,— that ivy on the wall.
That headlong ivy! not a leaf will grow
But thinking of a wreath. Large leaves, smooth leaves,
Serrated like my vines, and half as green.
I like such ivy; bold to leap a height
'Twas strong to climb! as good to grow on graves
As twist about a thyrus; pretty too,
(And that's not ill) when twisted round a comb.'
Thus speaking to myself, half singing it,
Because some thoughts are fashioned like a bell
To ring with once being touched, I drew a wreath
Drenched, blinding me with dew, across my brow
And fastening it behind so, . . . turning faced
. . . My public! — cousin Romney — with a mouth
Twice graver than his eyes.

I stood there fixed —

My arms up, like the caryatid, sole
Of some abolished temple, helplessly
Persistent in a gesture which derides
A former purpose. Yet my blush was flame,
As if from flax, not stone.

'Aurora Leigh,

The earliest of Aurora's!'

Hand stretched out

I clasped, as shipwrecked men will clasp a hand,
Indifferent to the sort of palm. The tide
Had caught me at my pastime, writing down
My foolish name too near upon the sea
Which drowned me with a blush as foolish. 'You,
My cousin!'

The smile died out in his eyes
And dropped upon his lips, a cold dead weight,
For just a moment . . . 'Here's a book I found!
No name writ on it — poems, by the form;
Some Greek upon the margin, — lady's Greek,
Without the accents. Read it? Not a word.
I saw at once the thing had witchcraft in't,
Whereof the reading calls up dangerous spirits;
I rather bring it to the witch.'

'My book!

You found it' . . .

'In the hollow by the stream
That beach leans down into — of which you said
The Oread in it has a Naiad's heart
And pines for waters.'

'Thank you.'

'Thanks to *you*,

My cousin! that I have seen you not too much
Witch, scholar, poet, dreamer, and the rest,
To be a woman also.'

With a glance

The smile rose in his eyes again, and touched
The ivy on my forehead, light as air.

I answered gravely, 'Poets needs must be
Or men or women — more's the pity.'

'Ah,

But men, and still less women, happily,
Scarce need be poets. Keep to the green wreath.
Since even dreaming of the stone and bronze

Brings headaches, pretty cousin, and defiles
The clean white morning dresses.'

'So you judge!

Because I love the beautiful, I must
Love pleasure chiefly, and be overcharged
For ease and whiteness. Well — you know the world,
And only miss your cousin; 'tis not much.
But learn this: I would rather take my part
With God's Dead who afford to walk in white
Yet spread his glory, than keep quiet here,
And gather up my feet from even a step,
For fear to soil my gown in so much dust.
I choose to walk at all risks.— Here, if heads
That hold a rythmic thought, must act perforce
For my part I choose headaches,— and to-day's
My birthday.'

'Dear Aurora, choose instead
To cure them. You have balsams.'

'I perceive

The headache is too noble for my sex.
You think the heartache would sound decenter,
Since that's the woman's special, proper ache,
And altogether tolerable, except
To a woman.'

Saying which, I loosed my wreath,
And swinging it beside me as I walked,
Half petulant, half playful, as we walked,
I sent a sidelong look to find his thought,—
As falcon set on falconer's finger may,

With sidelong head, and startled, braving eye,
Which means, 'You'll see — you'll see! I'll soon take
flight —

You shall not hinder.' He, as shaking out
His hand and answering, 'Fly then,' did not speak,
Except by such a gesture. Silently
We paced, until, just coming into sight
Of the house-windows, he abruptly caught
At one end of the swinging wreath, and said,
'Aurora!' There I stopped short, breath and all.

'Aurora, let's be serious, and throw by
This game of head and heart. Life means, be sure,
Both heart and head,—both active, both complete,
And both in earnest. Men and women make
The world, as head and heart make human life.
Work man, work woman, since there's work to do
In this beleaguered earth, for head and heart,
And thought can never do the work of love;
But work for ends, I mean for uses: not
For such sleek fringes (do you call them ends?
Still less God's glory) as we sew ourselves
Upon the velvet of those baldaquins
Held 'twixt us and the sun. That book of yours,
I have not read a page of; but I toss
A rose up — it falls calyx down, you see!
And chances are that, being a woman, young,
And pure, with such a pair of large, calm eyes,
You write as well . . . and ill . . . upon the whole,

As other women. If as well, what then?
 If even a little better, . . . still what then?
 We want the Best in art now, or no art.
 The time is done for facile settings up
 Of minnow gods, nymphs here and tritons there;
 The polytheists have gone out in God,
 That unity of Bests. No best, no God!
 And so with art, we say. Give art's divine,
 Direct, indubitable, real as grief,—
 Or leave us to the grief we grow ourselves
 Divine by overcoming with mere hope
 And most prosaic patience. You, you are young
 As Eve with nature's daybreak on her face;
 But this same world you are come to, dearest coz,
 Has done with keeping birthdays, saves her wreaths
 To hang upon her ruins,—and forgets
 To rhyme the cry with which she still beats back
 Those savage, hungry dogs that hunt her down
 To the empty grave of Christ. The world's hard
 pressed;
 The sweat of labour in the early curse
 Has (turning acrid in six thousand years)
 Become the sweat of torture. Who has time,
 An hour's time . . . think! . . . to sit upon a bank
 And hear the cymbal tinkle in white hands?
 When Egypt's slain, I say, let Miriam sing!—
 Before . . . where's Moses?'
 ' Ah — exactly that
 Where's Moses? — is a Moses to be found?

You'll seek him vainly in the bulrushes,
While I in vain touch cymbals. Yet concede,
Such sounding brass has done some actual good
(The application in a woman's hand,
If that were credible, being scarcely spoilt,)
In colonising beehives.'

‘ There it is ! —

You play beside a death-bed like a child,
Yet measure to yourself a prophet's place
To teach the living. None of all these things,
Can women understand. You generalise
Oh, nothing! — not even grief! Your quick-breathed
 hearts,

So sympathetic to the personal pang,
Close on each separate knife-stroke, yielding up
A whole life at each wound; incapable
Of deepening, widening a large lap of life
To hold the world-full woe. The human race
To you means, such a child, or such a man,
You saw one morning waiting in the cold,
Beside that gate, perhaps. You gather up
A few such cases, and when strong sometimes
Will write of factories and of slaves, as if
Your father were a negro, and your son
A spinner in the mills. All's yours and you,
All, coloured with your blood, or otherwise
Just nothing to you. Why, I call you hard
To general suffering. Here's the world half blind
With intellectual light, half brutalised

With civilisation, having caught the plague
 In silks from Tarsus, shrieking east and west
 Along a thousand railroads, mad with pain
 And sin too! . . . does one woman of you all,
 (You who weep easily) grow pale to see
 This tiger shake his cage? — does one of you
 Stand still from dancing, stop from stringing pearls,
 And pine and die because of the great sum
 Of universal anguish? — Show me a tear
 Wet as Cordelia's, in eyes bright as yours,
 Because the world is mad! You cannot count,
 That you should weep for this account, not you!
 You weep for what you know. A red-haired child
 Sick in a fever, if you touch him once,
 Though but so little as with a finger-tip,
 Will set you weeping; but a million sick
 You could as soon weep for the rule of three,
 Or compound fractions. Therefore, this same world
 Uncomprehended by you, must remain
 Uninfluenced by you. Women as you are,
 Mere women, personal and passionate,
 You give us doating mothers, and perfect wives,
 Sublime Madonnas, and enduring saints!
 We get no Christ from you,—and verily
 We shall not get a poet, in my mind.'

‘ With which conclusions you conclude ’ . . .

‘ We are young,

Aurora, you and I. The world . . . look round . . .

The world, we're come too late, is swollen hard
 With perished generations and their sins :
 The civiliser's spade grinds horribly
 On dead men's bones, and cannot turn up soil
 That's otherwise than fetid. All success
 Proves partial failure ; all advance implies
 What's left behind ; all triumph, something crushed
 At the chariot-wheels ; all government, some wrong :
 And rich men make the poor, who curse the rich,
 Who agonise together, rich and poor,
 Under and over, in the social spasm
 And crisis of the ages. Here's an age,
 That makes its own vocation ! here, we have stepped
 Across the bounds of time ! here's nought to see,
 But just the rich man, and just Lazarus,
 And both in torments ; with a mediate gulph,
 Though not a hint of Abraham's bosom.

Who,

Being man, Aurora, can stand calmly by
 And view these things, and never tease his soul
 For some great cure ? No physic for this grief,
 In all the earth and heavens too ?'

' May I choose indeed

But vow away my years, my means, my aims,
 Among the helpers, if there's any help
 In such a social strait ? The common blood
 That swings along my veins, is strong enough
 To draw me to this duty.'

Then I spoke.

' I have not stood long on the strand of life,

And these salt waters have had scarcely time
To creep so high up as to wet my feet.
I cannot judge these tides — I shall, perhaps.
A woman's always younger than a man
At equal years, because she is disallowed
Maturing by the outdoor sun and air,
And kept in long-clothes past the age to walk.
Ah well, I know you men judge otherwise !
You think a woman ripens as a peach,
In the cheeks, chiefly. Pass it to me now ;
I'm young in age, and younger still, I think,
As a woman. But a child may say amen
To a bishop's prayer and feel the way it goes ;
And I, incapable to loose the knot
Of social questions, can approve, applaud
August compassion, Christian thoughts that shoot
Beyond the vulgar white of personal aims.
Accept my reverence.'

There he glowed on me
With all his face and eyes. 'No other help ?'
Said he — 'no more than so ?'

'What help ?' I asked,
'You'd scorn my help,— as Nature's self, you say,
Has scorned to put her music in my mouth
Because a woman's. Do you now turn round
And ask for what a woman cannot give ?'

'For what she only can,' I turn and ask.
He answered, catching up my hands in his,

And dropping on me from his high-eaved brow
 The full weight of his soul, — ‘I ask for love,
 And that she can; for life in fellowship
 Through bitter duties — that, I know she can;
 For wifehood . . . will she?’

‘Now,’ I said, ‘may God
 Be witness ’twixt us two!’ and with the word,
 Meseemed I floated into a sudden light
 Above his stature, — ‘am I proved too weak
 To stand alone, yet strong enough to bear
 Such leaners on my shoulder? poor to think,
 Yet rich enough to sympathise with thought?
 Incompetent to sing, as blackbirds can,
 Yet competent to love, ‘like HIM?’

I paused:
 Perhaps I darkened, as the light house will
 That turns upon the sea. ‘It’s always so!
 Anything does for a wife.’

‘Aurora, dear,
 And dearly honored’ . . . he pressed in at once
 With eager utterance,—‘you translate me ill.
 I do not contradict my thought of you
 Which is most reverent, with another thought
 Found less so. If your sex is weak for art,
 (And I who said so, did but honour you
 By using truth in courtship) it is strong
 For life and duty. Place your fecund heart
 In mine, and let us blossom for the world

That wants love's colour in the grey of time.
My talk, meanwhile, is arid to you, ay,
Since all my talk can only set you where
You look down coldly on the arena-heaps
Of headless bodies, shapeless, indistinct !
The Judgment-Angel scarce would find his way
Through such a heap of generalised distress
To the individual man with lips and eyes —
Much less Aurora. Ah my sweet, come down,
And hand in hand we'll go where yours shall touch
These victims, one by one ! till one by one,
The formless, nameless trunk of every man
Shall seem to wear a head with hair you know.
And every woman catch you mother's face
To melt you into passion.'

‘ I am a girl,’

I answered slowly ; ‘ you do well to name
My mother's face. Though far too early, alas,
God's hand did interpose 'twixt it and me,
I know so much of love, as used to shine
In that face and another. Just so much ;
No more indeed at all. I have not seen
So much love since, I pray you pardon me,
As answers even to make a marriage with
In this cold land of England. What you love,
Is not a woman, Romney, but a cause ;
You want a helpmate, not a mistress, sir,
A wife to help your ends . . . in her no end !
Your cause is noble, your ends excellent,

But I, being most unworthy of these and that,
Do otherwise conceive of love. Farewell.'
'Farewell, Aurora? you reject me thus?'
He said.

'Sir, you were married long ago,
You have a wife already whom you love,
Your social theory. Bless you both, I say.
For my part, I am scarcely meek enough
To be the handmaid of a lawful spouse.
Do I look a Hagar, think you?'

'So you jest!'

'Nay so, I speak in earnest,' I replied.
'You treat of marriage too much like, at least,
A chief apostle; you would bear with you
A wife . . . a sister . . . shall we speak it out?
A sister of charity.'

I retain

The very last word which I said that day,
As you the creaking of the door, years past,
Which let upon you such disabling news
You ever after have been graver. He,
His eyes, the motions in his silent mouth,
Were fiery points on which my words were caught,
Transfixed for ever in my memory
For his sake, not their own. And yet I know
I did not love him . . . nor he me . . . that's sure . . .
And what I said, is unrepented of,
As truth is always. Yet . . . a princely man!—
If hard to me, heroic for himself!

He bears down on me through the slanting years,
The stronger for the distance. If he had loved,
Ay, loved me, with that retributive face, . . .
I might have been a common woman now,
And happier, less known and left alone;
Perhaps a better woman after all, —
With chubby children hanging on my neck
To keep me low and wise. Ah me, the vines
That bear such fruit, are proud to stoop with it.
The palm stands upright in a realm of sand.

TENNYSON'S ENID





TENNYSON'S ENID.



GERAINT AND ENID.

.
AND Prince Geraint, now thinking that he heard
The noble hart at bay, now the far horn,
A little vexed at losing of the hunt,
A little at the vile occasion, rode,
By ups and downs, thro' many a grassy glade
And valley, with fixt eye following the three.
At last they issued from the world of wood,
And climb'd upon a fair and even ridge,
And show'd themselves against the sky, and sank.
And thither came Geraint, and underneath
Behold the long street of a little town
In a long valley, on one side whereof,
White from the mason's hand, a fortress rose ;
And on one side a castle in decay,
Beyond a bridge that spann'd a dry ravine :
And out of town and valley came a noise
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed
Brawling, or like a clamor of the rooks
At distance, ere they settle for the night.
And onward to the fortress rode the three,
And enter'd, and were lost behind the walls.

“ So,” thought Geraint, “ I have track’d him to his earth.”
And down the long street riding wearily,
Found every hostel full, and everywhere
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot hiss
And bustling whistle of the youth who scour’d
His master’s armor ; and of such a one
He ask’d, “ What means the tumult in the town ? ”
Who told him, scouring still “ The sparrow-hawk ! ”
Then riding close behind an ancient churl,
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,
Ask’d yet once more what meant the hubbub here ?
Who answer’d gruffly, “ Ugh ! the sparrow-hawk.”
Then riding further past an armorer’s,
Who, with back turn’d, and bow’d above his work,
Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,
He put the self-same query, but the man
Not turning round, nor looking at him, said :
“ Friend, he that labors for the sparrow-hawk
Has little time for idle questioners.”
Whereat Geraint flash’d into sudden spleen :
“ A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-hawk !
Tits, wrens, and all wing’d nothings peck him dead !
Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg
The murmur of the world ! What is it to me ?
O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,
Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-hawks !
Speak, if ye be not like the rest, hawk-mad,
Where can I get me harborage for the night ?

And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy? Speak!"
At this the armorer turning all amazed
And seeing one so gay in purple silks,
Came forward with the helmet yet in hand
And answer'd, "Pardon me, O stranger knight;
We hold a tourney here to-morrow morn,
And there is scanty time for half the work.
Arms? truth! I know not: all are wanted here.
Harborage? truth, good truth, I know not, save,
It may be, at Earl Yniol's o'er the bridge
Yonder." He spoke and fell to work again.

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet,
Across the bridge that spann'd the dry ravine,
There musing sat the hoary-headed Earl,
(His dress a suit of fray'd magnificence,
Once fit for feasts of ceremony) and said:
"Whither, fair son?" to whom Geraint replied,
"O friend, I seek a harborage for the night."
Then Yniol, "Enter therefore and partake
The slender entertainment of a house
Once rich, now poor, but ever open-door'd."
"Thanks, venerable friend," replied Geraint;
"So that ye do not serve me sparrow-hawks
For supper, I will enter, I will eat
With all the passion of a twelve hours' fast."
Then sigh'd and smiled the hoary-headed Earl,
And answer'd, "Graver cause than yours is mine
To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-hawk:

But in, go in ; for save yourself desire it,
We will not touch upon him ev'n in jest."
Then rode Geraint into the castle court,
His charger trampling many a prickly star
Of sprouted thistles on the broken stones.
He look'd and saw that all was ruinous.
Here stood a shatter'd archway plumed with fern ;
And here had fall'n a great part of a tower,
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,
And like a crag was gay with wilding flowers :
And high above a piece of turret stair,
Worn by the feet that now were silent, wound
Bare to the sun, and monstrous ivy-stems
Claspt the gray walls with hairy fibred arms,
And suck'd the joining of the stones, and look'd
A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove.

And while he waited in the castle court,
The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang
Clear thro' the open casement of the Hall,
Singing ; and as the sweet voice of a bird,
Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,
Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
That sings so delicately clear, and make
Conjecture of the plumage and the form,
So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint ;
And made him like a man abroad at morn
When first the liquid note beloved of men
Comes flying over many a windy wave

To Britain, and in April suddenly
Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green and red,
And he suspends his converse with a friend,
Or it may be the labor of his hands,
To think or say, "there is the nightingale ;"
So fared it with Geraint, who thought and said,
"Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me."

It chanced the song that Enid sang was one
Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid sang :
"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud ;
Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine, storm, and cloud ;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown ;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down ;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

"Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands ;
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands ;
For man is man and master of his fate.

"Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd ;
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud ;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate."

"Hark, by the bird's song you may learn the nest."
Said Ynoil ; "Enter quickly." Entering then,
Richt o'er a mount of newly-fallen stones,

The dusky-rafter'd many-cobweb'd Hall,
He found an ancient dame in dim brocade ;
And near her, like a blossom vermeil-white,
That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,
Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,
Her daughter. In a moment thought Geraint,
" Here by God's rood is the one maid for me."
But none spake word except the hoary Earl ;
" Enid, the good knight's horse stands in the court ;
Take him to stall, and give him corn, and then
Go to the town and buy us flesh and wine ;
And we will make us merry as we may.
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great."

He spake: the Prince, as Enid past him, fain
To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught
His purple scarf, and held, and said " Forbear !
Rest ! the good house, tho' ruin'd O my Son,
Endures not that her guest should serve himself."
And reverencing the custom of the house
Geraint, from utter courtesy, forebore.

So Enid took his charger to the stall ;
And after went her way across the bridge,
And reach'd the town, and while the Prince and Earl
Yet spoke together, came again with one,
A youth, that following with a costrel bore
The means of goodly welcome, flesh and wine.
And Enid brought sweet cakes to make them cheer,
And in her veil enfolded, manchet bread.


And then, because their hall must also serve
For kitchen, boil'd the flesh, and spread the board,
And stood behind, and waited on the three.
And seeing her so sweet and serviceable,
Geraint had longing in him evermore
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,
That crost the trencher as she laid it down :
But after all had eaten, then Geraint,
For now the wine made summer in his veins,
Let his eye rove in following, or rest
On Enid at her lowly handmaid-work,
Now here, now there, about the dusky hall ;
Then suddenly addressed the hoary Earl :

“ Fair Host and Earl, I pray your courtesy ;
This sparrow-hawk, what is he, tell me of him.
His name ? but no, good faith, I will not have it :
For if he be the knight whom late I saw
Ride into that new fortress by your town,
White from the mason's hand, then have I sworn
From his own lips to have it — I am Geraint
Of Devon — for this morning when the Queen
Sent her own maiden to demand the name,
His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,
Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd
Indignant to the Queen ; and then I swore
That I would track this caitiff to his hold,
And fight and break his pride, and have it of him.
And all unarm'd I rode, and thought to find

Arms in your town, where all the men are mad;
They take the rustic murmur of their bourg
For the great wave that echoes round the world;
They would not hear me speak: but if ye know
Where I can light on arms, or if yourself
Should have them, tell me, seeing I have sworn
That I will break his pride and learn his name,
Avenging this great insult done the Queen."

Then cried Earl Yniol. "Art thou he indeed,
Geraint, a man far-sounded among men
For noble deeds? and truly I, when first
I saw you moving by me on the bridge,
Felt you were somewhat, yea and by your state
And presence might have guess'd you one of those
That eat in Arthur's hall at Camelot.
Nor speak I now from foolish flattery;
For this dear child hath often heard me praise
Your feats of arms, and often when I paused
Hath ask'd again, and ever loved to hear;
So grateful is the noise of noble deeds
To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong:
O never yet had woman such a pair
Of suitors as this maiden; first Limours,
A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,
Drunk even when he woo'd; and be he dead
I know not, but he past to the wild land.
The second was your foe, the sparrow-hawk,
My curse, my nephew — I will not let his name

.



Slip from my lips if I can help it — he,
When I that knew him fierce and turbulent
Refused her to him, then his pride awoke ;
And since the proud man often is the mean,
He sow'd a slander in the common ear,
Affirming that his father left him gold,
And in my charge, which was not render'd to him ;
Bribed with large promises the men who served
About my person, the more easily
Because my means were somewhat broken into
Thro' open doors and hospitality ;
Raised my own town against me in the night
Before my Enid's birthday, sack'd my house ;
From mine own earldom foully ousted me ;
Built that new fort to overawe my friends,
For truly there are those who love me yet ;
And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,
Where doubtless he would put me soon to death,
But that his pride too much despises me :
And I myself sometimes despise myself ;
For I have let men be, and have their way ;
Am much too gentle, have not used my power :
Nor know I whether I be very base
Or very manful, whether very wise
Or very foolish ; only this I know,
That whatsoever evil happen to me,
I seem to suffer nothing, heart or limb,
But can endure it all most patiently."

“ Well said, true heart,” replied Geraint, “ but arms ;
That if the sparrow-hawk, this nephew, fight,
In next day’s tourney I may break his pride.”
And Yniol answer’d “ Arms, indeed, but old
And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,
Are mine, and therefore at your asking, yours.
But in this tournament can no man tilt,
Except the lady he loves best be there.
Two forks are fixt into the meadow ground,
And over these is laid a silver wand,
And over that is placed the sparrow-hawk,
The prize of beauty for the fairest there.
And this, what knight soever be in field
Lays claim to for the lady at his side,
And tilts with my good nephew thereupon,
Who being apt at arms and big of bone
Has ever won it for the lady with him,
And toppling over all antagonism
Has earn’d himself the name of sparrow-hawk.
But you, that have no lady, cannot fight.”

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied,
Leaning a little toward him, “ Your leave!
Let *me* lay lance in rest, O noble host,
For this dear child, because I never saw,
Tho’ having seen all beauties of our time,
Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.
And if I fall her name will yet remain
Untarnish’d as before; but if I live,

So aid me Heaven when at mine uttermost,
As I will make her truly my true wife."

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart
Danced in his bosom, seeing better days.
And looking round he saw not Enid there,
(Who hearing her own name had slipt away)
But that old dame, to whom full tenderly
And fondling all her hand in his he said,
" Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,
And best by her that bore her understood.
Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest
Tell her, and prove her heart toward the Prince."

So spake the kindly-hearted Earl, and she
With frequent smile and nod departing found,
Half disarray'd as to her rest, the girl ;
Whom first she kiss'd on either cheek, and then
On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
And told her all their converse in the hall,
Proving her heart : but never light and shade
Coursed one another more on open ground
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and pale
Across the face of Enid hearing her ;
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,
When weight is added only grain by grain,
Sank her sweet head upon her gentle breast ;
Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,

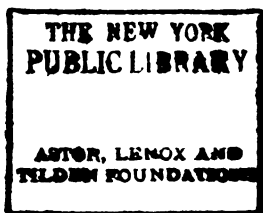
Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it;
So moving without answer to her rest
She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw
The quiet night into her blood, but lay
Contemplating her own unworthiness;
And when the pale and bloodless east began
To quicken to the sun, arose, and raised
Her mother too, and hand in hand they moved
Down to the meadow where the jousts were held,
And waited there for Yniol and Geraint.

ROBERT BROWNING'S BALAUCTION





ROBERT BROWNING'S BALAUSTION.



BALAUSTION'S ADVENTURE.

ABOUT that strangest, saddest, sweetest song
I, when a girl, heard in Kameiros once,
And, after, saved my life by? Oh, so glad
To tell you the adventure!

Petalé,

Phullis, Charopé, Chrusion! You must know,
This "after" fell in that unhappy time
When poor reluctant Nikias, pushed by fate,
Went falteringly against Syracuse;
And there shamed Athens, lost her ships and men,
And gained a grave, or death without a grave.
I was at Rhodes — the isle, not Rhodes the town;
Mine was Kameiros — when the news arrived:
Our people rose in tumult, cried, "No more
Duty to Athens! let us join the League,
And side with Sparta, share the spoil, — at worst,
Abjure a headship that will ruin Greece!"
And so, they sent to Knidos for a fleet
To come and help revolters. Ere help came, —
Girl as I was, and never out of Rhodes
The whole of my first fourteen years of life,

But nourished with Ilissian mother's-milk, —
I passionately cried to who would hear,
And those who loved me at Kameiros, " No!
Never throw Athens off for Sparta's sake, —
Never disloyal to the life and light
Of the whole world worth calling world at all!
Rather go die at Athens, lie outstretched
For feet to trample on, before the gate
Of Diomedes or the Hippadai,
Before the temples and among the tombs,
Than tolerate the grim felicity
Of harsh Lakonia! Ours the fasts and feasts,
Choës and Chutroi; ours the sacred grove
Agora, Dikasteria, Poikilé,
Pnux, Keramikos; Salamis in sight!
Psuttalia, Marathon itself, not far!
Ours the great Dionusiæc theatre,
And tragic triad of immortal fames,
Aischulos, Sophokles, Euripides!
To Athens, all of us that have a soul,
Follow me!" And I wrought so with my prayer,
That certain of my kinsfolk crossed the strait,
And found a ship at Kaunos; well-disposed
Because the Captain — where did he draw breath
First but within Psuttalia? Thither fled
A few like-minded as ourselves. We turned
The glad prow westward; soon were out at sea,
Pushing, brave ship with the vermilion cheek,
Proud for our heart's true harbor. But a wind

Lay ambushed by Point Malea of bad fame,
And leapt out, bent us from our course. Next day
Broke stormless, and so next blue day and next.
“But whither bound in this white waste?” we plagued
The pilot’s old experience: “Cos, or Crete?”
Because he promised us the land ahead.
While we strained eyes to share in what he saw,
The captain’s shout startled us; round we rushed:
What hung behind us but a pirate-ship
Panting for the good prize? “Row! harder row!
Row for dear life!” the captain cried: “’tis Crete,
Friendly Crete, looming large there! Beat this craft,
That’s but a keles, one-benched pirate-bark,
Lokrian, or that bad breed off Thessaly!
Only, so cruel are such water-thieves,
No man of you, no woman, child, or slave,
But falls their prey, once let them board our boat!”
So, furiously our oarsmen rowed and rowed;
And when the oars flagged somewhat, dash and dip,
As we approached the coast and safety, so
That we could hear behind us plain the threats
And curses of the pirate panting up
In one more throe and passion of pursuit, —
Seeing our oars flag in the rise and fall,
I sprang upon the altar by the mast,
And sang aloft — some genius prompting me —
That song of ours which saved at Salamis:
“O sons of Greeks! go, set your country free,
Free your wives, free your children, free the fanes

O' the gods, your fathers founded, — sepulchres
They sleep in! Or save all, or all be lost!"
Then, in a frenzy, so the noble oars
Churned the black water white, that well away
We drew, soon saw land rise, saw hills grow up,
Saw spread itself a sea-wide town with towers,
Not fifty stadio distant; and, betwixt,
A large bay and a small, the islet-bar,
Even Ortugia's self — oh, luckless we!
For here was Sicily and Syracuse:
We ran upon the lion from the wolf.
Ere we drew breath, took counsel, out there came
A galley, hailed us: "Who asks entry here
In war-time? Are you Sparta's friend or foe?"
"Kaunians," — our captain judged his best reply,
"The mainland-seaport that belongs to Rhodes;
Rhodes that casts in her lot now with the League,
Forsaking Athens, — you have heard belike!"
"Ay, but we heard all Athens in one ode
Just now! we heard her in that Aischulos!
You bring a boatful of Athenians here,
Kaunians although you be; and prudence bids
For Kaunos' sake, why, carry them unhurt
To Kaunos, if you will: for Athen's sake,
Back must you, though ten pirates blocked the bay!
We want no colony from Athens here,
With memories of Salamis, forsooth,
To spirit up our captives, that pale crowd
I' the quarry, whom the daily pint of corn

Keeps in good order and submissiveness.”
Then the gray captain prayed them by the gods,
And by their own knees, and their fathers’ beards,
They should not wickedly thrust suppliants back,
But save the innocent on traffic bound, —
Or, maybe, some Athenian family
Perishing of desire to die at home, —
From that vile foe still lying on its oars,
Waiting the issue in the distance. Vain !
Words to the wind ! And we were just about
To turn and face the foe, as some tired bird
Barbarians pelt at, drive with shouts away
From shelter in what rocks, however rude,
She makes for, to escape the kindled eye,
Split beak, crook’d claw, o’ the creature, cormorant,
Or ossifrage, that, hardly baffled, hangs
Afloat i’ the foam, to take her if she turn.
So were we at destruction’s very edge,
When those o’ the galley, as they had discussed
A point, a question raised by somebody,
A matter mooted in a moment, — “ Wait ! ”
Cried they (and wait we did, you may be sure),
“ That song was veritable Aischulos,
Familiar to the mouth of man and boy,
Old glory : how about Euripides ?
The newer and not yet so famous bard,
He that was born upon the battle-day
While that song and the salpinx sounded him
Into the world, first sound, at Salamis —

Might you know any of his verses too ? ”
Now, some one of the gods inspired this speech :
Since ourselves knew what happened but last year —
How, when Gulippos gained his victory
Over poor Nikias, poor Demosthenes,
And Syracuse condemned the conquered force
To dig and starve i' the quarry, branded them —
Freeborn Athenians, brute-like in the front
With horse-head brands — ah, “ Region of the
Steed ! ” —

Of all these men immersed in misery,
It was found none had been advantaged so
By aught in the past life he used to prize
And pride himself concerning, — no rich man
By riches, no wise man by wisdom, no
Wiser man still (as who loved more the Muse)
By storing, at brain's edge and tip of tongue,
Old glory, great plays that had long ago
Made themselves wings to fly about the world, —
Not one such man was helped so at his need
As certain few that (wisest they of all)
Had, at first summons, oped heart, flung door wide,
At the new knocking of Euripides,
Nor drawn the bolt with who cried “ Decadence !
And, after Sophokles, be nature dumb ! ”
Such, — and I see in it God Bacchos' boon
To souls that recognized his latest child,
He who himself, born latest of the gods,
Was stoutly held impostor by mankind, —

Such were in safety: any who could speak
A chorus to the end, or prologize,
Roll out a rhesis, wield some golden length
Stiffened by wisdom out into a line,
Or thrust and parry in bright monostich,
Teaching Euripides to Syracuse —
Any such happy man had prompt reward:
If he lay bleeding on the battle-field
They stanch'd his wounds, and gave him drink and
food;
If he were slave i' the house, for reverence
They rose up, bowed to who proved master now,
And bade him go free, thank Euripides!
Ay, and such did so: many such, he said,
Returning home to Athens, sought him out,
The old bard in the solitary house,
And thanked him ere they went to sacrifice.
I say, we knew that story of last year!

Therefore, at mention of Euripides,
The captain crow'd out "Euoi, praise the God!
Oöp, boys, bring our owl-shield to the fore!
Out with our Sacred Anchor! Here she stands,
Balaustion! Strangers, greet the lyric girl!
Euripides? Babai! what a word there 'scaped
Your teeth's enclosure, quoth my grandsire's song!
Why, fast as snow in Thrace, the voyage through,
Has she been falling thick in flakes of him!
Frequent as figs at Kaunos, Kaunians said.

Balaustion, stand forth and confirm my speech !
Now it was some whole passion of a play ;
Now, peradventure, but a honey-drop
That slipt its comb i' the chorus. If there rose
A star, before I could determine steer
Southward or northward — if a cloud surprised
Heaven, ere I fairly hollaed ' Furl the sail ! ' —
She had at finger's end both cloud and star ;
Some thought that perched there, tame and tuneable,
Fitted with wings ; and still, as off it flew,
' So sang Euripides,' she said, ' so sang
The meteoric poet of air and sea,
Planets and the pale populace of heaven,
The mind of man, and all that's made to soar ! '
And so, although she has some other name,
We only call her Wild-pomegranate-flower,
Balaustion ; since, where'er the red bloom burns
I' the dull dark verdure of the bounteous tree,
Dethroning, in the Rosy Isle, the rose,
You shall find food, drink, odor, all at once ;
Cool leaves to bind about an aching brow,
And, never much away, the nightingale.
Sing them a strophe, with the turn-again,
Down to the verse that ends all, proverb-like,
And save us, thou Balaustion, bless the name ! ”

But I cried, “ Brother Greek ! better than so, —
Save us, and I have courage to recite
The main of a whole play from first to last ;

That strangest, saddest, sweetest song of his,
ALKESTIS; which was taught, long years ago
At Athens, in Glaukinos' archonship,
But only this year reached our Isle o' the Rose.
I saw it at Kameiros; played the same,
They say, as for the right Lenean feast
In Athens; and beside the perfect piece, —
Its beauty and the way it makes you weep, —
There is much honor done your own loved God
Herakles, whom you house i' the city here
Nobly, the Temple wide Greece talks about!
I come a suppliant to your Herakles!
Take me and put me on his temple-steps,
To tell you his achievement as I may,
And, that told, he shall bid you set us free!"

Then, because Greeks are Greeks, and hearts are hearts,
And poetry is power, — they all outbroke
In a great jóyous laughter with much love:
"Thank Herakles for the good holiday!
Make for the harbor! Row, and let voice ring,
'In we row, bringing more Euripides!'
All the crowd, as they lined the harbor now,
'More of Euripides!' — took up the cry.
We landed; the whole city, soon astir,
Came rushing out of gates in common joy
To the suburb temple; there they stationed me
O' the topmost step: and plain I told the play,
Just as I saw it; what the actors said,

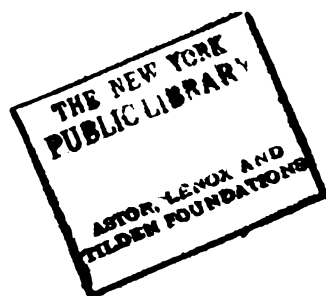
And what I saw, or thought I saw the while,
At our Kameiros theatre, clean-scooped
Out of a hill-side, with the sky above
And sea before our seats in marble row:
Told it, and, two days more, repeated it,
Until they sent us on our way again
With good words and great wishes.

BURNS' HIGHLAND MARY





BURNS' HIGHLAND MARY.



HIGHLAND MARY.

Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie! *
There simmer first unfaulds her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk! †
How rich the hawthorn's blossom!
As underneath their fragrant shade,
I clasped her to my bosom!
The golden hours, on angel wings,
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me, as light and life,
Was my sweet Highland Mary!

Wi' mony a vow, and lock'd embrace,
Our parting was fu' tender;
And, pledging aft to meet again,

* Muddy.

† Birch.

We tore oursels asunder;
But, oh! fell Death's untimely frost,
That nipt my flower sae early! —
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary!

Oh, pale, pale now, those rosy lips,
I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly!
And closed for aye the sparkling glance
That dwelt on me sae kindly!
And mouldering now in silent dust
That heart that lo'ed me dearly —
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary!

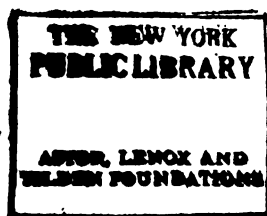
KEATS' MADELINE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

7



KEATS' MADELINE.



THE EVE OF ST. AGNES.

ST. AGNES' EVE — Ah, bitter chill it was !
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold ;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold :
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven without a death
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he
saith.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man ;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees :
The sculptured dead, on each side seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails :
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by ; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor;
But no — already had his death-bell rung;
The joys of all his life were said and sung;
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinner's sake to grieve.

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their
breasts.

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
The brain, new-stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white,
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline :
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard : her maiden eyes divine,
Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by — she heeded not at all : in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retired ; not cool'd by high disdain,
But she saw not : her heart was elsewhere ;
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the
year.

She danced along with vague regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short :
The hallow'd hour was near at hand : she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport ;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwink'd with faery fancy ; all amorn,
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen ;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss — in sooth such things
have been.

He ventures in : let no buzz'd whisper tell :
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's feverous citadel :
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage : not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

Ah, happy chance ! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-handed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland :
He startled her ; but soon she knew his face,
And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, " Mercy, Porphyro ! hie thee from this place ;
They are all here to-night, the whole bloodthirsty race.

“Get hence! get hence! there’s dwarfish Hildebrand:
He had a fever late, and in a fit
He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:
Then there’s that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his gray hairs — Alas me! flit!
Flit like a ghost away,” — “Ah, Gossip dear,
We’re safe enough; here in this arm-chair sit,
And tell me how” — “Good Saints! not here, not
here;
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier.”

He follow’d through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume;
And as she mutter’d “Well-a — well-a-day!”
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
“Now tell me where is Madeline,” said he,
“O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
When they St. Agnes’ wool are weaving piously.”

“St. Agnes! ah! it is St. Agnes’ Eve —
Yet men will murder upon holy days:
Though must hold water in a witch’s sieve,
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
To venture so: it fills me with amaze.
To see thee, Porphyro! — St. Agnes’ Eve!
God’s help! my lady fair the conjuror plays
This very night: good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I’ve mickle time to grieve.”

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth closed a wondrous riddle-book,
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot: then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
"A cruel man and impious thou art:
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, go! I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,"
Quoth Porphyro: "O may I ne'er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
Good Angela, believe me by these tears;
Or I will, even in a moment's space,
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard them, though they be more fang'd than wolves
and bears.

“ Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, church-yard thing,
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never miss'd.” Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legion'd fairies paced the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous
debt.

“ It shall be as thou wishest,” said the Dame:
“ All cates and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour frame
Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
Wait here, my child, with patience kneel in prayer
The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.”

So saying she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd ;
The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear
To follow her ; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd and chaste ;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleased amain.
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

Her faltering hand upon the balustrade
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware :
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed ;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd and
fled.

Out went the taper as she hurried in ;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died :
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide :
No utter'd syllable, or, woe betide !
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side ;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imageries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and
kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together preste,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seem'd a splendid angel newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven: — Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant boddice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile, she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
Until the poppi'd warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain;
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray;
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

Stolen to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breathed himself: then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept,
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo!—how fast
she slept.

Then by the bedside, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguish'd, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:—
The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd ;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon ;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez ; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

These delicacies he heap'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver : sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—
“ And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake
Thou art my heaven, and I thine hermit :
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
Or shall I drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.”

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains : — 'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream :
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam ;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies :
It seem'd he never, never could redeem
From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes ;
So mused awhile, entoil'd in woofed phantasies.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous, — and, in chords that tenderest be,
He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence call'd "La belle dame sans mercy:"
Close to her ear touching the melody; —
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan:
He ceased — she panted quick — and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep.
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

"Ah, Porphyro!" said she, "but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
How changed thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings drear!
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go."

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
Seen 'mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose:
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odor with the violet,—
Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows
Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet:
"This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!"
'Tis dark: the ice gusts still rave and beat:
"No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing;—
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing."

"My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil dyed?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,
A famish'd pilgrim, — saved by miracle
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel."

“Hark! ’tis an elfin storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed :
Arise — arise ! the morning is at hand ; —
The bloated wassailers will never heed ; —
Let us away, my love, with happy speed ;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see —
Drown’d all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead :
Awake ! arise ! my love, and fearless be,
For o’er the southern moors I have a home for thee.”

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears —
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found,
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-droop’d lamp was flickering by each door ;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
Flutter’d in the besieging wind’s uproar ;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall !
Like phantoms to the iron porch they glide,
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flagon by his side :
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye and inmate owns :
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide : —
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones ;
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old
Died palsy-twich'd, with meagre face deform;
The beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought-for slept among his ashes cold.

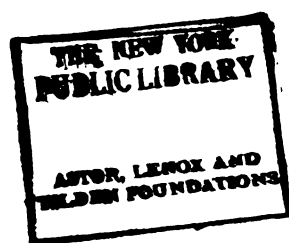
COLERIDGE'S GENEVIEVE

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COLERIDGE'S GENEVIEVE



COLERIDGE'S GENEVIEVE.



LOVE.

ALL thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.

Oft in my waking dreams do I
Live o'er again that happy hour,
When midway on the mount I lay,
Beside the ruined tower.

The moonshine, stealing o'er the scene,
Had blended with the lights of eve;
And she was there, my hope, my joy,
My own dear Genevieve!

She leaned against the armed man,
The statue of the armed knight;
She stood and listened to my lay,
Amid the lingering light.

Few sorrows hath she of her own,
My hope! my joy! my Genevieve!
She loves me best, whene'er I sing
The songs that make her grieve.

I played a soft and doleful air,
I sang an old and moving story —
An old rude song, that suited well
That ruin wild and hoary.

She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace;
For well she knew, I could not choose
But gaze upon her face.

I told her of the Knight that wore
Upon his shield a burning brand;
And that for ten long years he wooed
The Lady of the Land.

I told her how he pined: and ah!
The deep, the low, the pleading tone
With which I sang another's love,
Interpreted my own.

She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes, and modest grace;
And she forgave me, that I gazed
Too fondly on her face!

But when I told the cruel scorn
That crazed that bold and lovely Knight,
And that he crossed the mountain-woods,
Nor rested day nor night ;

That sometimes from the savage den,
And sometimes from the darksome shade,
And sometimes starting up at once
In green and sunny glade,—

There came and looked him in the face
An angel beautiful and bright :
And that he knew it was a Fiend,
This miserable Knight !

And that, unknowing what he did,
He leaped amid a murderous band,
And saved from outrage worse than death
The Lady of the Land ;—

And how she wept, and clasped his knees ;
And how she tended him in vain —
And ever strove to expiate
The scorn that crazed his brain ;—

And that she nursed him in a cave ;
And how his madness went away,
When on the yellow forest-leaves
A dying man he lay ; —

His dying words — but when I reached
That tenderest strain of all the ditty,
My faltering voice and pausing harp
Disturbed her soul with pity!

All impulses of soul and sense
Had thrilled my guileless Genevieve;
The music and the doleful tale,
The rich and balmy eve;

And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng,
And gentle wishes long subdued,
Subdued and cherished long!

She wept with pity and delight,
She blushed with love, and virgin shame;
And like the murmur of a dream,
I heard her breathe my name.

Her bosom heaved — she stepped aside,
As conscious of my look she stepped —
Then suddenly, with timorous eye,
She fled to me and wept.

She half inclosed me with her arms,
She pressed me with a meek embrace;
And bending back her head, looked up,
And gazed upon my face.

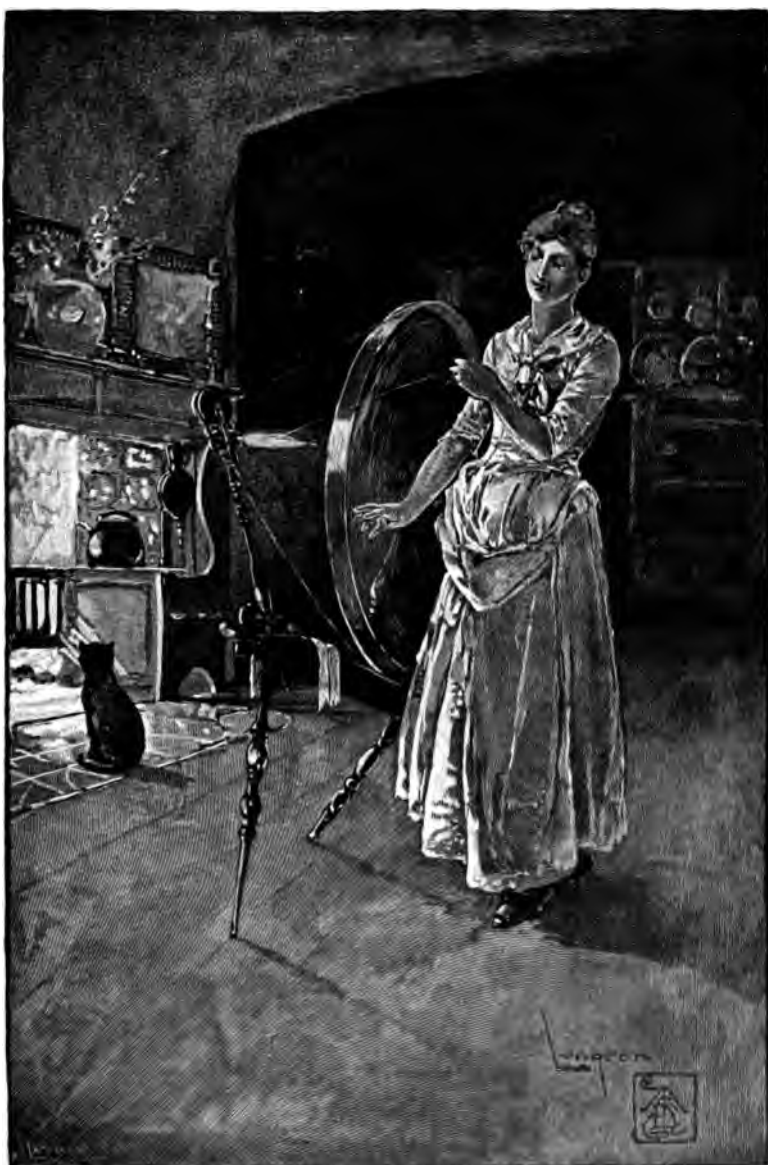
'Twas partly love, and partly fear,
And partly 'twas a bashful art,
That I might rather feel, than see,
 The swelling of her heart.

I calmed her fears, and she was calm,
And told her love with virgin pride;
And so I won my Genevieve,
 My bright and beauteous Bride.

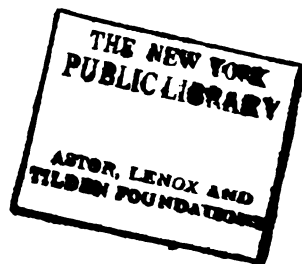


WORDSWORTH'S LUCY

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WORDSWORTH'S LUCY.



LUCY.

I.

STRANGE fits of passion have I known:
And I will dare to tell,
But in the Lover's ear alone
What once to me befel.

When she I loved looked every day
Fresh as a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
All over the wide lea;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot;
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near, and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on ; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped :
When down behind the cottage-roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a Lover's head !
" O mercy ! " to myself I cried,
" If Lucy should be dead ! "

II.

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love :

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye !
— Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be ;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me !

III.

I travelled among unknown men,
In lands beyond the sea ;
Nor, England ! did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream !
Nor will I quit thy shore
A second time ; for still I seem
To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
The joy of my desire ;
And she I cherished turned her wheel
Beside an English fire.

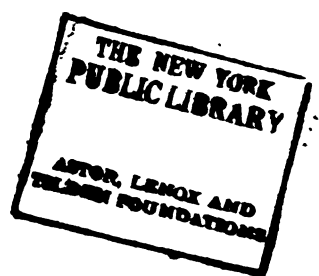
Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed
The bowers where Lucy played ;
And thine too is the last green field
That Lucy's eyes surveyed.

SCOTT'S ELLEN

SCOTT'S ELLEN



SCOTT'S ELLEN.



THE LADY OF THE LAKE.

CANTO FIRST.

XIV.

AND now, to issue from the glen,
No pathway meets the wanderer's ken,
Unless he climb, with footing nice,
A far-projecting precipice.
The broom's tough roots his ladder made,
The hazel saplings lent their aid;
And thus an airy point he won,
Where, gleaming with the setting sun,
One burnish'd sheet of living gold,
Loch Katrine lay beneath him roll'd,
In all her length far winding lay,
With promontory, creek, and bay,
And islands that, empurpled bright,
Floated amid the livelier light,
And mountains, that like giants stand,
To sentinel enchanted land.
High on the south, huge Benvenue
Down on the lake in masses threw

Crags, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurl'd,
The fragments of an earlier world ;
A wildering forest feather'd o'er
His ruin'd sides and summit hoar,
While on the north, through middle air,
Ben-an heaved high his forehead bare.

XV.

From the steep promontory gazed
The stranger, raptured and amazed.
And, " What a scene were here," he cried,
" For princely pomp, or churchman's pride !
On this bold brow, a lordly tower ;
In that soft vale, a lady's bower ;
On yonder meadow, far away,
The turrets of a cloister gray ;
How blithely might the bugle-horn
Chide, on the lake, the lingering morn !
How sweet, at eve, the lover's lute
Chime, when the groves were still and mute !
And, when the midnight moon should lave
Her forehead in the silver wave,
How solemn on the ear would come
The holy matins' distant hum,
While the deep peal's commanding tone
Should wake, in yonder islet lone,
A sainted hermit from his cell,
To drop a bead with every knell —

And bugle, lute, and bell, and all,
Should each bewilder'd stranger call
To friendly feast, and lighted hall.

XVI.

“ Blithe were it then to wander here!
But now, — beshrew yon nimble deer,—
Like that same hermit's, thin and spare,
The copse must give my evening fare;
Some mossy bank my couch must be,
Some rustling oak my canopy.
Yet pass we that; the war and chase
Give little choice of resting-place; —
A summer night, in greenwood spent,
Were but to-morrow's merriment:
But hosts may in these wilds abound,
Such as are better miss'd than found;
To meet with Highland plunderers here,
Were worse than loss of steed or deer.
I am alone;— my bugle strain
May call some straggler of the train;
Or, fall the worst that may betide,
Ere now this falchion has been tried.”

XVII.

But scarce again his horn he wound,
When lo! forth starting at the sound
From underneath an aged oak,

That slanted from the islet rock,
A damsel guider of its way,
A little skiff shot to the bay,
That round the promontory steep
Led its deep line in graceful sweep,
Eddying in almost viewless wave,
The weeping willow-twigg to lave,
And kiss, with whispering sound and slow,
The beach of pebbles bright as snow.
The boat had touch'd this silver strand,
Just as the Hunter left his stand,
And stood conceal'd amid the brake,
To view this Lady of the Lake.
The maiden paused, as if again
She thought to catch the distant strain.
With head up-raised, and look intent,
And eye and ear attentive bent,
And locks flung back, and lips apart,
Like monument of Grecian art,
In listening mood, she seem'd to stand,
The guardian Naiad of the strand.

XVIII.

And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace
A Nymph, a Naiad, or a Grace,
Of finer form, or lovelier face!
What though the sun, with ardent frown,
Had slightly tinged her cheek with brown,—

The sportive toil, which, short and light
Had dyed her glowing hue so bright,
Served too in hastier swell to show
Short glimpses of a breast of snow :
What though no rule of courtly grace
To measured mood had train'd her pace,—
A foot more light, a step more true,
Ne'er from the heath-flower dash'd the dew ;
E'en the slight harebell raised its head,
Elastic from her airy tread :
What though upon her speech there hung
The accents of the mountain tongue,—
Those silver sounds, so soft, so dear,
The listener held his breath to hear !

XIX.

A chieftain's daughter seem'd the maid ;
Her satin snood,* her silken plaid,
Her golden brooch, such birth betray'd.
And seldom was a snood amid
Such wild luxuriant ringlets hid,
Whose glossy black to shame might bring
The plumage of the raven's wing ;
And seldom o'er a breast so fair,
Mantled a plaid with modest care,
And never brooch the folds combined
Above a heart more good and kind.

* *Snood*, the fillet worn round the hair of maidens.

Her kindness and her worth to spy,
You need but gaze on Ellen's eye;
Not Katrine, in her mirror blue,
Gives back the shaggy banks more true,
Than every free-born glance confess'd
The guileless movements of her breast;
Whether joy danced in her dark eye,
Or woe or pity claim'd a sigh,
Or filial love was glowing there,
Or meek devotion pour'd a prayer,
Or tale of injury call'd forth
The indignant spirit of the North.
One only passion unreveal'd,
With maiden pride the maid conceal'd,
Yet not less purely felt the flame ;—
O need I tell that passion's name !

XX.

Impatient of the silent horn,
Now on the gale her voice was borne ;—
“ Father ! ” she cried ; the rocks around
Loved to prolong the gentle sound.
Awhile she paused, no answer came,—
“ Malcom, was thine the blast ? ” the name
Less resolutely utter'd fell,
The echoes could not catch the swell.
“ A stranger I,” the Huntsman said,
Advancing from the hazel shade.
The maid, alarm'd, with hasty oar,

Push'd her light shallop from the shore,
And when a space was gain'd between,
Closer she drew her bosom's screen ;
(So forth the startled swan would swing,
So turn to prune his ruffled wing.)
Then safe, though flutter'd and amazed,
She paused and on the stranger gazed.
Not his the form, nor his the eye,
That youthful maidens wont to fly.

XXI.

On his bold visage middle age
Had slightly press'd its signet sage
Yet had not quench'd the open truth
And fiery vehemence of youth ;
Forward and frolic glee was there,
The will to do, the soul to dare,
The sparkling glance, soon blown to fire,
Of hasty love, or headlong ire.
His limbs were cast in manly mould,
For hardy sports or contest bold ;
And though in peaceful garb array'd,
And weaponless, except his blade,
His stately mien as well implied
A high born heart, a martial pride,
As if a Baron's crest he wore,
And sheathed in armor trode the shore.
Slighting the petty need he show'd,

He told of his benighted road ;
His ready speech flow'd fair and free,
In phrase of gentlest courtesy ;
Yet seem'd that tone, and gesture bland,
Less used to sue than to command.

XXII.

A while the maid the stranger eyed,
And, reassured, at length replied,
That Highland halls were open still
To wilder'd wanderers of the hill.
“ Nor think you unexpected come
To yon lone isle, our desert home ;
Before the heath had lost the dew,
This morn, a couch was pull'd for you ;
On yonder mountain's purple head
Have ptarmigan and heath-cock bled,
And our broad nets have swept the mere,
To furnish forth your evening cheer.” —
“ Now, by the rood, my lovely maid,
Your courtesy has err'd,” he said ;
“ No right have I to claim, misplaced,
The welcome of expected guest.
A wanderer, here by fortune tost,
My way, my friends, my courser lost,
I ne'er before, believe me, fair,
Have ever drawn your mountain air,
Till on this lake's romantic strand,
I found a fay in fairy land ! ” —

XXIII.

“I well believe,” the maid replied,
As her light skiff approach’d the side,—
“I well believe, that ne’er before
Your foot has trod Loch Katrine’s shore;
But yet, as far as yesternight,
Old Allan-Bane foretold your plight,—
A gray-hair’d sire, whose eye intent
Was on the vision’d future bent.
He saw your steed, a dappled gray,
Lie dead beneath the birchen way;
Painted exact your form and mien,
Your hunting suit of Lincoln green,
That tassell’d horn so gayly gilt,
That falchion’s crooked blade and hilt,
That cap with heron plumage trim,
And yon two hounds so dark and grim.
He bade that all should ready be,
To grace a guest of fair degree;
But light I held his prophecy,
And deem’d it was my father’s horn,
Whose echoes o’er the lake were borne.”

XXIV.

The stranger smiled: — “Since to yon home
A destined errant-knight I come,
Announced by prophet sooth and old,
Doom’d, doubtless, for achievement bold,
I’ll lightly front each high emprise,

For one kind glance of those bright eyes.
Permit me, first, the task to guide
Your fairy frigate o'er the tide."
The maid, with smile suppress'd and sly
The toil unwonted saw him try;
For seldom sure, if e'er before,
His noble hand had grasp'd an oar:
Yet with main strength his strokes he drew,
And o'er the lake the shallop flew;
With heads erect, and whimpering cry,
The hounds behind their passage ply.
Nor frequent does the bright oar break
The dark'ning mirror of the lake,
Until the rocky isle they reach,
And moor their shallop on the beach.

XXV.

The stranger view'd the shore around,
'Twas all so close with copsewood bound,
Nor track, nor pathway might declare
That human foot frequented there,
Until the mountain maiden show'd
A clambering unsuspected road,
That winded through the tangled screen,
And open'd on a narrow green,
Where weeping birch and willow round
With their long fibres swept the ground.
Here, for retreat in dangerous hour,
Some chief had framed a rustic bower.

XXVI.

It was a lodge of ample size,
But strange of structure and device,
Of such materials, as around
The workman's hand had readiest found.
Lopp'd off their boughs, their hoar trunks bared,
And by the hatchet rudely squared,
To give the walls their destined height,
The sturdy oak and ash unite ;
While moss and clay and leaves combined
To fence each crevice from the wind.
The lighter pine-trees, over-head,
Their slender length for rafters spread,
And wither'd heath and rushes dry
Supplied a russet canopy.
Due westward, fronting to the green,
A rural portico was seen,
Aloft on native pillars borne,
Of mountain fir, with bark unshorn,
Where Ellen's hand had taught to twine
The ivy and Idæan vine,
The clematis, the favor'd flower
Which boasts the name of virgin-bower,
And every hardy plant could bear
Loch Katrine's keen and searching air.
An instant in this porch she staid,
And gayly to the stranger said,
"On heaven and on thy lady call,
And enter the enchanted hall!"

XXVII.

“ My hope, my heaven, my trust must be
My gentle guide, in following thee.”
He cross’d the threshold — and a clang
Of angry steel that instant rang.
To his bold brow his spirit rush’d,
But soon for vain alarm he blush’d,
When on the floor he saw display’d,
Cause of the din, a naked blade
Dropp’d from the sheath, that careless flung
Upon a stag’s huge antlers swung;
For all around, the walls to grace,
Hung trophies of the fight or chase:
A target there, a bugle here,
A battle-axe, a hunting-spear,
And broadswords, bows, and arrows store,
With the tusk’d trophies of the boar.
Here grins the wolf as when he died,
And there the wild-cat’s brindled hide
The frontlet of the elk adorns,
Or mantles o’er the bison’s horns;
Pennons and flags defaced and stain’d,
That blackening streaks of blood retain’d,
And deer-skins, dappled, dun, and white,
With otter’s fur and seal’s unite,
In rude and uncouth tapestry all
To garnish forth the sylvan hall.

XXVIII.

The wondering stranger round him gazed,
And next the fallen weapon raised : —
Few were the arms whose sinewy strength
Sufficed to stretch it forth at length,
And as the brand he poised and sway'd,
“ I never knew but one,” he said,
“ Whose stalwart arm might brook to wield
A blade like this in battle-field.”
She sigh'd, then smiled and took the word :
“ You see the guardian champion's sword :
As light it trembles in his hand,
As in my grasp a hazel wand ;
My sire's tall form might grace the part
Of Ferragus or Ascabart ;
But in the absent giant's hold
Are women now, and menials old.”

XXIX.

The mistress of the mansion came,
Mature of age, a graceful dame ;
Whose easy step and stately port
Had well become a princely court,
To whom, though more than kindred knew,
Young Ellen gave a mother's due.
Meet welcome to her guest she made,
And every courteous rite was paid,
That hospitality could claim,

Though all unask'd his birth and name.
Such then the reverence to a guest,
That fellest foe might join the feast,
And from his deadliest foeman's door
Unquestion'd turn, the banquet o'er.
At length his rank the stranger names,
"The knight of Snowdoun, James Fitz-James;
Lord of a barren heritage,
Which his brave sires, from age to age,
By their good swords had held with toil;
His sire had fallen in such turmoil,
And he, God wot, was forced to stand
Oft for his right with blade in hand.
This morning, with Lord Moray's train,
He chased a stalwart stag in vain,
Outstripp'd his comrades, miss'd the deer,
Lost his good steed, and wander'd here."

XXX.

Fain would the knight in turn require
The name and state of Ellen's sire.
Well show'd the elder lady's mien,
That courts and cities she had seen;
Ellen, though more her looks display'd
The simple grace of sylvan maid,
In speech and gesture, form and face,
Show'd she was come of gentle race.
'Twere strange, in ruder rank to find,
Such looks, such manners, and such mind.

Each hint the Knight of Snowdoun gave,
Dame Margaret heard with silence grave;
Or Ellen, innocently gay,
Turn'd all inquiry light away:—
“Weird women we! by dale and down
We dwell, afar from tower and town.
We stem the flood, we ride the blast,
On wandering knights our spells we cast;
While viewless minstrels touch the string,
'Tis thus our charmed rhymes we sing.”
She sung, and still a harp unseen
Fill'd up the symphony between.

XXXI.

SONG.

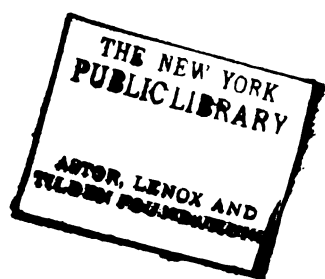
“Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows no breaking;
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking.
In our isle's enchanted hall,
Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
Fairy strains of music fall,
Every sense in slumber dewing.
Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Dream of fighting fields no more,
Sleep the sleep that knows no breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking.

“No rude sound shall reach thine ear,
Armor’s clang, or war-steed champing,
Trump nor pibroch summon here
Mustering clan, or squadron tramping;
Yet the lark’s shrill fife may come
At the day-break from the fallow,
And the bittern sound his drum,
Booming from the sedgy shallow.
Ruder sounds shall none be near,
Guards nor warders challenge here;
Here’s no war-steed’s neigh and champing,
Shouting clans, or squadrons stamping.”

HERRICK'S CORINNA



HERRICK'S CORINNA.



CORINNA'S GOING A MAYING.

GET up, get up for shame, the blooming morne
Upon her wings presents the god unshorne.
See how Aurora throwes her faire
Fresh-quilted colours through the aire!
Get up, sweet slug-a-bed, and see
The dew-bespangling herbe and tree.
Each flower has wept, and bow'd toward the east,
Above an houre since; yet you not drest,
Nay! not so much as out of bed?
When all the birds have mattens seyed,
And sung their thankful hymnes, 'tis sin,
Nay, profanation to keep in,
When as a thousand virgins on this day,
Spring, sooner then the lark, to fetch in May.

Rise, and put on your foliage, and be seene
To come forth, like the spring-time, fresh and greene
And sweet as Flora. Take no care
For jewels for your gowne or haire.
Feare not; the leaves will strew
Gemms in abundance upon you.
Besides, the childhood of the day has kept,
Against you come, some orient pearls unwept:

Come, and receive them while the light
Hangs on the dew-locks of the night,
And Titan on the eastern hill
Retires himselfe, or else stands still
Till you come forth. Wash, dresse, be briefe in praying:
Few beads are best, when once we goe a Maying.

Come, my Corinna, come; and comming, marke
How each field turns a street, each street a parke
Made green, and trimm'd with trees: see how
Devotion gives each house a bough
Or branch: each porch, each doore, ere this,
An arke, a tabernacle is,
Made up of white-thorn neatly enterwove;
As if here were those cooler shades of love.
Can such delights be in the street
And open fields, and we not see't?
Come, we'll abroad; and let's obay
The proclamation made for May,
And sin no more, as we have done, by staying;
But, my Corinna, come, let's goe a Maying.

There's not a budding boy, or girle, this day,
But is got up, and gone to bring in May.
A deale of youth, ere this, is come
Back, and with white-thorn laden home.
Some have dispatcht their cakes and creame,
Before that we have left to dreame:
And some have wept, and woo'd, and plighted troth,
And chose their priest, ere we can cast off sloth.

Many a greene-gown has been given ;
Many a kisse, both odde and even ;
Many a glance, too, has been sent
From out the eye, love's firmament ;
Many a jest told of the keyes betraying
This night, and locks pickt, yet w'are not a Maying.

Come, let us goe, while we are in our prime,
And take the harmlesse follie of the time.
We shall grow old apace, and die
Before we know our liberty.
Our life is short, and our dayes run
As fast away as do's the sunne ;
And as a vapour, or a drop of raine,
Once lost, can ne'er be found againe,
So when or you or I are made
A fable, song, or fleeting shade,
All love, all liking, all delight,
Lies drown'd with us in endlesse night.
Then while time serves, and we are but decaying ;
Come, my Corinna, come, let's goe a Maying.

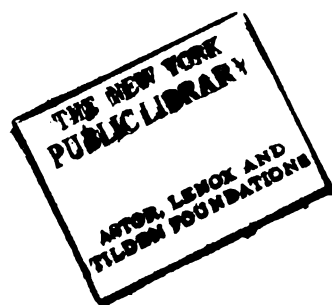


SHAKESPEARE'S CORDELIA





SHAKESPEARE'S CORDELIA.



KING LEAR.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Enter Lear, Cornwall, Albany, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia,
and attendants.

Lear. Attend the lords of France and Burgundy,
Gloster.

Glo. I shall, my liege.

[*Exeunt* Gloster and Edmund.]

Lear. Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.
Give me the map there. — Know, that we have divided
In three, our kingdom : and 'tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age ;
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
Unburden'd crawl toward death. — Our son of Cornwall,
And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
We have this hour a constant will to publish
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife
May be prevented now. The princes, France and
Burgundy,
Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,

And here are to be answer'd. — Tell me, my daughters,
(Since now we will divest us, both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of state,)
Which of you, shall we say, doth love us most?
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge. — Goneril,
Our eldest born, speak first.

Gon. Sir, I love you more than words can wield the
matter;

Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour:
As much as child e'er lov'd, or father found;
A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

Cor. [*Aside.*] What shall Cordelia do? Love, and be
silent.

Lear. Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,
With shadowy forests, and with champains rich'd,
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,
We make thee lady: to thine and Albany's issue,
Be this perpetual. — What says our second daughter,
Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

Reg. I am made of that self metal as my sister,
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love;
Only she comes too short, — that I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys,
Which the most precious square of sense possesses,

And find I am alone felicitate
In your dear highness' love.

Cor. [*Aside.*] Then, poor Cordelia!
And yet not so; since, I am sure, my love's
More richer than my tongue.

Lear. To thee and thine, hereditary ever,
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom;
No less in space, validity, and pleasure,
Than that conferr'd on Goneril. — Now, our joy,
Although our last, not least; to whose young love
The vines of France, and milk of Burgundy,
Strive to be interest'd; what can you say, to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

Cor. Nothing, my lord.

Lear. Nothing!

Cor. Nothing.

Lear. Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

Cor. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
According to my bond: nor more, nor less.

Lear. How, how, Cordelia! mend your speech a little
Lest you may mar your fortunes.

Cor. Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed
That lord, whose hand must take my plight, shall carry

Half my love with him, half my care, and duty :
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.

Lear. But goes thy heart with this ?

Cor. Ay, good my lord.

Lear. So young, and so untender ?

Cor. So young, my lord, and true.

Lear. Let it be so, — thy truth, then, be thy dower :
For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate, and the night ;
By all the operation of the orbs
From whom we do exist, and cease to be ;
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And, as a stranger to my heart and me,
Hold thee, from this, for ever. The barbarous Scythian,
Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and relieved,
As thou my sometime daughter.

Kent. Good my liege, —

Lear. Peace, Kent !

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.
I lov'd her most, and thought to set my rest
On her kind nursery. — Hence, and avoid my sight ! —
So be my grave my peace, as here I give
Her father's heart from her ! — Call France : — who stirs ?
Call Burgundy. — Cornwall, and Albany,
With my two daughters' dowers digest the third :

Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.
 I do invest you jointly with my power,
 Pre-eminence, and all the large effects
 That troop with majesty. Ourself by monthly course,
 With reservation of a hundred knights,
 By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode
 Make with you by due turns. Only, we still retain
 The name, and all th' additions to a king;
 The sway,
 Révénue, execution of the rest,
 Belovèd sons, be yours : which to confirm
 This coronet part between you. [*Giving the crown.*]

Flourish. *Re-enter* Gloster, with France,
 Burgundy, and Attendants.

Glo. Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

Lear. My lord of Burgundy,
 We first address toward you, who with this king
 Hath rivall'd for our daughter : what, in the least,
 Will you require in present dower with her,
 Or cease your quest of love?

Bur. Most royal majesty,
 I crave no more than hath your highness offer'd,
 Nor will you tender less.

Lear. Right noble Burgundy,
 When she was dear to us, we did hold her so ;
 But now her price is fall'n. Sir, there she stands :
 If aught within that little seeming substance,
 Or all of it, with our displeasure piec'd,

And nothing more, may fitly like your grace,
She's there, and she is yours.

Bur. I know no answer.

Lear. Will you, with those infirmities she owes,
Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,
Dower'd with our curse, and stranger'd with our oath,
Take her, or leave her?

Bur. Pardon me, royal sir;
Election makes not up on such conditions.

Lear. Then leave her, sir; for, by the power that
made me,
I tell you all her wealth. — [*To France.*] For you, great
king,

I would not from your love make such a stray,
To match you where I hate; therefore, beseech you
T'avert your liking a more worthier way,
Than on a wretch whom nature is asham'd
Almost to acknowledge hers.

France. This is most strange,
That she, who even but now was your best object,
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,
The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time
Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle
So many folds of favor. Sure, her offence
Must be of such unnatural degree,
That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affection
Fall into taint: which to believe of her,
Must be a faith that reason, without miracle,
Could never plant in me.

Cor. I yet beseech your majesty,
(If for I want that glib and oily art,
To speak and purpose not; since what I well intend,
I'll do 't before I speak,) that you make known
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,
No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,
That hath depriv'd me of your grace and favour;
But even for want of that for which I am richer, —
A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue
That I am glad I have not, though not to have it,
Hath lost me in your liking.

Lear. Better thou
Hadst not been born, than not to have pleas'd me
better.

France. Is it but this? a tardiness in nature,
Which often leaves the history unspoke,
That it intends to do? — My lord of Burgundy,
What say you to the lady? Love is not love,
When it is mingled with regards that stand
Aloof from the entire point. Will you have her?
She is herself a dowry.

Bur. Royal King,
Give but that portion which yourself propos'd,
And here I take Cordelia by the hand,
Duchess of Burgundy.

Lear. Nothing: I have sworn: I am firm.

Bur. I am sorry, then, you have so lost a father,
That you must lose a husband.

Cor. Peace be with Burgundy!

Since that respects of fortune are his love,
I shall not be his wife. [poor ;

France. Fairest Cordelia, thou art most rich, being
Most choice, forsaken, and most lov'd, despis'd !
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon :
Be it lawful, I take up what's cast away.
Gods, gods ! 'tis strange, that from their cold'st neglect
My love should kindle to inflam'd respect. —
Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France :
Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy
Shall buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me. —
Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind :
Thou lovest here, a better where to find.

Lear. Thou hast her, France : let her be thine ; for
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see [we
That face of hers again : — therefore, be gone
Without our grace, our love, our benison.
Come, noble Burgundy.

[*Flourish.* *Exeunt* Lear, Burgundy, Cornwall,
Albany, Gloster, *and* Attendants.

France. Bid farewell to your sisters.

Cor. Ye jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes
Cordelia leaves you : I know you what you are ;
And, like a sister, am most loath to call
Your faults as they are nam'd. Love well our father :
To your professéd bosoms I commit him :
But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,
I would prefer him to a better place.
So, farewell to you both.

Gon. Prescribe not us our duty.

Reg. Let your study
Be to content your lord, who hath receiv'd you
At fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted,
And well are worth the want that you have wanted.

Cor. Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides :
Who covers faults, at last shame them derides.
Well may you prosper !

France. Come, my fair Cordelia.

[*Exeunt France and Cordelia.*

Gon. Sister, it is not little I have to say of what most
nearly appertains to us both. I think our father will
hence to-night.

Reg. That's most certain, and with you ; next month
with us.

Gon. You see how full of changes his age is ; the
observation we have made of it hath not been little : he
always loved our sister most, and with what poor judg-
ment he hath now cast her off, appears too grossly.

Reg. 'Tis the infirmity of his age : yet he hath ever
but slenderly known himself.

Gon. The best and soundest of his time hath been
but rash ; then, must we look to receive from his age,
not alone the imperfections of long-engrafted condition,
but, therewithal, the unruly waywardness that infirm and
choleric years bring with them.

Reg. Such unconstant starts are we like to have
from him, as this of Kent's banishment.

Gon. There is farther compliment of leave-taking

between France and him. Pray you, let us hit together : if our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us.

Reg. We shall further think of it.

Gon. We must do something, and i' the heat.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT 2. SCENE 4.

Enter Cornwall, Regan, Gloster *and* Servants.

Lear. Good morrow to you both.

Corn. Hail to your grace! [*Kent is set at liberty.*

Reg. I am glad to see your highness.

Lear. Regan, I think you are ; I know what reason I have to think so : if thou shouldst not be glad, I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb, Sepulchring an adult'ress.—[*To Kent.*] O, are you free ? Some other time for that.—Belovèd Regan, Thy sister's naught : O Regan, she hath tied Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here,—

[*Points to his heart.*

I can scarce speak to thee ; thou'lt not believe, With how deprav'd a quality — O Regan !

Reg. I pray you, sir, take patience : I have hope, You less know how to value her desert, Than she to scant her duty.

Lear. Say, how is that ?

Reg. I cannot think, my sister in the least

Would fail her obligation : if, sir, perchance,
 She have restrain'd the riots of your followers,
 'Tis on such ground, and to such wholesome end,
 As clears her from all blame.

Lear. My curses on her !

Reg. O, sir, you are old ;
 Nature in you stands on the very verge
 Of her confine : you should be rul'd, and led
 By some discretion, that discerns your state
 Better than you yourself. Therefore, I pray you,
 That to our sister you do make return ;
 Say, you have wrong'd her, sir.

Lear. Ask her forgiveness !
 Do you but mark how this becomes the house :
[Kneeling.

*" Dear daughter, I confess that I am old ;
 Age is unnecessary : on my knees I beg
 That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food."*

Reg. Good sir, no more ; these are unsightly tricks :
 Return you to my sister.

Lear. Never, Regan :
 She hath abated me of half my train ;
 Look'd black upon me ; struck me with her tongue,
 Most serpent-like, upon the very heart :
 All the stor'd vengeance of heaven fall
 On her ungrateful top ! Strike her young bones,
 You taking airs, with lameness !

Cor. Fie, sir, fie ! *[flames*

Lear. You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding

Into her scornful eyes. Infect her beauty,
You fen-suck'd fogs, drawn by the powerful sun,
To fall and blast her pride!

Reg. O the blest gods! So will you wish on me,
When the rash mood is on.

Lear. No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse :
Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give
The o'er to harshness : her eyes are fierce ; but thine
Do comfort, and not burn. 'Tis not in thee
To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,
To bandy hasty words, to scant my sizes,
And, in conclusion, to oppose the bolt
Against my coming in : thou better know'st
The offices of nature, bond of childhood,
Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude ;
Thy half o' the kingdom hast thou not forgot,
Wherein I thee endow'd.

Reg. Good sir, to the purpose.

Lear. Who put my man i' the stocks ?

[*Tucket within.*

Corn. What trumpet's that ?

Enter Oswald.

Reg. I know't my sister's : this approves her letter,
That she would soon be here.—Is your lady come ?

Lear. This is a slave, whose easy-borrow'd pride
Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.—
Out, varlet, from my sight !

Corn. What means your grace ? [hope

Lear. Who stock'd my servant ? Regan, I have good

Thou didst not know of 't. Who comes here? O

Enter Goneril. [heavens,

If you do love old men, if your sweet sway

Allow obedience, if yourselves are old,

Make it your cause; send down, and take my part:—

[*To Gon.*] Art not asham'd to look upon this beard?—

O Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand?

Gon. Why not by the hand, sir? How have I of-

All's not offence that indiscretion finds, [fended?

And dotage terms so.

Lear.

O sides, you are too tough;

Will you yet hold?—How came my man i' the stocks?

Corn. I set him there, sir: but his own disorders

Deserv'd much less advancement.

Lear.

You! did you?

Reg. I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.

If, till the expiration of your month,

You will return and sojourn with my sister,

Dismissing half your train, come then to me:

I am now from home, and out of that provision

Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

Lear. Return to her, and fifty men dismiss'd?

No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose

To wage against the enmity o' the air;

To be a comrade with the wolf and owl,—

Necessity's sharp pinch!—Return with her?

Why, the hot-blooded France that dowerless took

Our youngest born, I could as well be brought

To knee his throne, and squire-like, pension beg
 To keep base life afoot.—Return with her ?
 Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter
 to this detested groom. [Looking at Oswald.

Gon. At your choice, sir.

Lear. I pr'ythee, daughter, do not make me mad !
 I will not trouble thee, my child ; farewell :
 We'll no more meet, no more see one another :—
 But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter ;
 Or, rather, a disease that's in my flesh,
 Which I must needs call mine : thou art a boil,
 A plague-sore, an embossèd carbuncle,
 In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee ;
 Let shame come when it will, I do not call it :
 I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
 Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove :
 Mend when thou canst ; be better at thy leisure :
 I can be patient ; I can stay with Regan.
 I and my hundred knights.

Reg. Not altogether so :
 I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided
 For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister ;
 For those that mingle reason with your passion,
 Must be content to think you old, and so —
 But she knows what she does.

Lear. Is this well spoken ?

Reg. I dare avouch it, sir : what, fifty followers ?
 Is it not well ? What should you need of more ?
 Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger

Speak 'gainst so great a number? How, in one house,
Should many people, under two commands,
Hold amity? 'Tis hard; almost impossible.

Gon. Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance
From those that she call servants, or from mine?

Reg. Why not, my lord? If then they chanc'd to
slack you,
We could control them. If you will come to me,
(For now I spy a danger,) I entreat you
To bring but five and twenty: to no more
Will I give place or notice.

Lear. I gave you all —

Reg. And in good time you gave it.

Lear. Made you my guardians, my depositaries;
But kept a reservation to be follow'd
With such a number. What, must I come to you
With five and twenty, Regan? said you so?

Reg. And speak 't again, my lord; no more with me.

Lear. Those wicked creatures yet do look well-
favour'd.

When others are more wicked; not being the worst,
Stands in some rank of praise.—[*To Gon.*] I'll go with
thee:

Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,
And thou art twice her love.

Gon. Hear me, my lord:
What need you five and twenty, ten, or five,
To follow in a house, where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?

Reg. What need one?

Lear. O, reason not the need : our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous :
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady ;
If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps the warm. But, for true need,—
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need,
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age ; wretched in both !
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely ; touch me with noble anger !
O, let not woman's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks ! — No, you unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both,
That all the world shall — I will do such things,—
What they are, yet I know not ; but they shall be
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep ;
No, I'll not weep : —
I have full cause of weeping ; but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
Or ere I'll weep.—O fool, I shall go mad !

Corn. Let us withdraw ; 'twill be a storm.

[*Exeunt Lear, Gloster, Kent, and Fool.*

Storm heard at a distance.

Reg. This house is little : the old man and his people
Cannot be well bestow'd.

Gon. 'Tis his own blame ; hath put himself from rest'
And must needs taste his folly.

Reg. For his particular, I'll receive him gladly,
But not one follower.

Gon. So am I purpos'd.
Where is my lord of Gloster ?

Corn. Follow'd the old man forth : —

Re-enter Gloster.

He is return'd.

Glo. The king is in high rage.

Corn. Whither is he going ?

Glo. He calls to horse ; but will I know not whither.

Corn. 'Tis best to give him way : he leads himself.

Gon. My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

Glo. Alack, the night comes on, and the bleak winds
Do sorely ruffle ; for many miles about
There's scarce a bush.

Reg. O, sir, to wilful men,
The injuries that they themselves procure
Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors :
He is attended with a desperate train ;
And what they may incense him to, being apt
To have his ear abus'd, wisdom bids fear.

Corn. Shut up your doors, my lord ; 'tis a wild night :
My Regan counsels well : come out o' the storm.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT 4. SCENE 3.

Enter Kent and Gentleman.

Kent. Why the king of France is so suddenly gone
back know you the reason?

Gen. Something he left imperfect in the state,
Which since his coming forth is thought of; which
Imports to the kingdom so much fear and danger
That his personal return was most requir'd
And necessary.

Kent. Whom hath he left behind him, general?

Gen. The Mareschal of France, Monsieur Le Far.

Kent. Did your letters pierce the queen to any
demonstration of grief? [sence,

Gen. Ay, sir; she took them, read them in my pre-
And now and then an ample tear trill'd down
Her delicate cheek: it seem'd she was a queen
Over her passion: who, most rebel-like,
Sought to be king o'er her.

Kent. O, then it mov'd her.

Gen. Not to a rage: patience and sorrow strove
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen
Sunshine and rain at once: her smiles and tears
Were like a better way: those happy smilets,
That play'd on her ripe lip, seem'd not to know
What guests were in her eyes; which parted thence,
As pearls from diamonds dropp'd — In brief, sorrow
Would be a rarity most belov'd, if all
Could so become it.

Kent. Made she no verbal question?

Gen. Faith, once or twice she heav'd the name of
"father"

Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart;
 Cried, "*Sisters! sisters! — Shame of ladies! sisters!
 Kent! father! sisters! What, i' the storm? i' the
 night?*"

Let pity not be believèd!" — There she shook
 The holy water from her heavenly eyes,
 And clamour moisten'd: then away she started
 To deal with grief alone.

Kent. It is the stars,
 The stars above us, govern our conditions;
 Else one self mate and mate could not beget
 Such different issues. You spoke not with her since?

Gen. No.

Kent. Was this before the king return'd?

Gen. No, since.

Kent. Well, sir, the poor distress'd Lear's in the
 town,

Who sometime, in his better tune, remembers
 What we are come about, and by no means
 Will yield to see his daughter.

Gen. Why, good sir?

Kent. A sovereign shame so elbows him: his own
 unkindness

That stripp'd her from his benediction, turn'd her
 To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights
 To his dog-hearted daughters,—these things sting
 His mind so venomously, that burning shame
 Detains him from Cordelia.

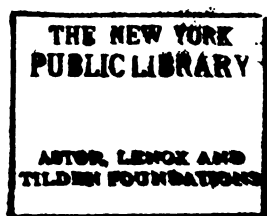
Gen. Alack, poor gentleman!

SPENSER'S UNA





SPENSER'S UNA.



THE FAERY QUEEN.

CANTO III.

NOUGHT is there under heaven's wide hollowness,
That moves more dear compassion of mind,
Then beauty brought t' unworthy wretchedness
Through envy's snares, or fortune's freaks unkind.
I, whether lately through her brightness blind,
Or through allegiance, and fast feälty,
Which I do owe unto all womankind,
Feel my heart pierced with so great agony,
When such I see, that all for pity I could die.

II.

And now it is empassionèd so deep,
For fairest Una's sake, of whom I sing,
That my frail eyes these lines with tears do steep,
To think how she through guileful handeling,
Though true as touch, though daughter of a king,
Though fair as ever living wight was fair,
Though nor in word nor deed ill meriting,
Is from her knight divorcèd in despair,
And her due loves derived to that vile witch's share.

III.

Yet she, most faithful lady, all this while
Forsaken, woful, solitary maid,
Far from all people's preace, as in exile,
In wilderness and wasteful deserts stray'd,
To seek her knight; who, subtilely betray'd
Through that late vision which th' enchanter wrought,
Had her abandon'd; she of nought afraid,
Through woods and wastnes wide him daily sought,
Yet wishèd tidings none of him unto her brought.

IV.

One day, nigh weary of the irksome way,
From her unhasty beast she did alight;
And on the grass her dainty limbs did lay
In secret shadow, far from all men's sight;
From her fair head her fillet she undight,
And laid her stole aside: Her angel's face,
As the great eye of heaven, shinèd bright,
And made a sunshine in the shady place;
Did never mortal eye behold such heavenly grace.

V.

It fortunèd, out of the thickest wood
A ramping lion rushèd suddenly,
Hunting full greedy after savage blood.
Soon as the royal virgin he did spy,

With gaping mouth at her he ran greedily,
To have at once devour'd her tender corse;
But to the prey when as he drew more nigh,
His bloody rage assuagèd with remorse,
And, with the sight amazed, forgot his furious force.

VI.

Instead thereof, he kiss'd her weary feet,
And lick'd her lily hands with fawning tongue;
As he her wrongèd innocence did weet.
O how can beauty master the most strong,
And simple truth subdue avenging wrong!
Whose yielded pride and proud submission,
Still dreading death, when she had markèd long,
Her heart gan melt in great compassion;
And drizzling tears did shed for pure affection.

VII.

"The lion, lord of every beast in field,"
Quoth she, "his princely puissance doth abate,
And mighty proud to humble weak does yield,
Forgetful of the hungry rage, which late
Him prick'd in pity of my sad estate:—
But he, my lion, and my noble lord,
How does he find in cruel heart to hate
Her, that him loved, and ever most adored
As the god of my life? why hath he me abhorr'd?"

VIII.

Redounding tears did choke th' end of her plaint,
Which softly echoed from the neighbour wood ;
And, sad to see her sorrowful constraint,
The kingly beast upon her gazing stood ;
With pity calm'd, down fell his angry mood.
At last, in close heart shutting up her pain,
Arose the virgin, born of heavenly brood,
And to her snowy palfrey got again,
To seek her strayèd champion if she might attain.

IX.

The lion would not leave her desolate,
But with her went along, as a strong guard
Of her chaste person, and a faithful mate
Of her sad troubles and misfortunes hard ;
Still, when she slept, he kept both watch and ward ;
And, when she waked, he waited diligent,
With humble service to her will prepared :
From her fair eyes he took commandement,
And ever by her looks conceivèd her intent.

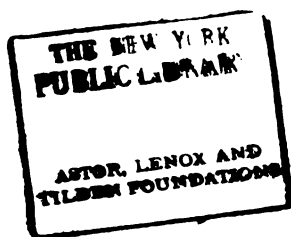
CHAUCER'S GRISELDA







CHAUCEER'S GRISELDA.



GRISELDA.

(From the Canterbury Tales.)

THERE is right at the west side of Itaille,
Down at the root of Vesulus the cold,
A lusty plain abundant of vitaille,
There many a town and tow'r thou may'st behold,
That founded were in time of fathers old,
And many another délitable sight,
And Saluces this noble country hight.

A marquis whilom lord was of that land,
As were his worthy elders him before ;
And obeisant, aye ready to his hand,
Were all his lieges bothé lesse and more :
Thus in delight he liveth, and hath done yore,
Belov'd and dread, through favour of Fortúne,
Both of his lordés and of his commúne.

Therewith he was, to speaken of lin'age,
The gentilest yborn of Lumbardy,
A fairé person, and strong, and young of age,
And full of honour and of courtesy ;
Discreet enough, his country for to gie,
Save in some thingés that he was to blame,
And Walter was this youngé lordés name.

I blame him thus, that he consider'd naught
 In timé coming what might him betide,
 But on his lust présent was all his thought,
 And for to hawk and hunt on every side;
 Well nigh all other carés let he slide;
 And eke he n'old (and that was worst of all)
 Wedden no wife for aught that might befall.

Only that point his people bare so sore,
 That flockmel on a day to him they went,
 And one of them, that wisest was of lore,
 Or ellés that the lord would best assent
 That he should tell him what the people meant,
 Or ellés could he well show such mattére)
 He to the marquis said as ye shall hear.

"For certés, Lord, so well us liketh you
 And all your work, and e'er have done, that we
 Ne coulden not ourself devisen how
 We mighten live in more felicity,
 Save one thing, Lord, if it your willé be
 That for to be a wedded man you lest,
 Then were your people in sovereign heartés rest.

.

Their meeké prayér and their piteous cheer
 Madé the marquis for to have pity.
 "Ye will," quod he, "mine owen people dear,
 To that I ne'er ere thought, constrainen me:

I me rejoicèd of my liberty,
 That seldom time is found in marriage;
 There I was free, I musté be in servage.

.

“ Let me alone in choosing of my wife;
 That charge upon my back I will endure:
 But I you pray and charge upon your life
 That what wife that I take, ye may assure
 To worship her, while that her life may dure,
 In word and work both here and ellés where,
 As she an emperorés daughter were.”

.

Naught far from thilké palace honouráble,
 Where as this marquis shope his marriage,
 There stood a thorp, of sité delectáble,
 In which that pooré folk of that villáge
 Hadden their beastés and their harbourgage,
 And of their labour take their sustenance,
 After that th’ earthé gave them ábundance.

Among this pooré folk there dwelt a man
 Which that was holden poorest of them all,
 But highé God sometímé senden can
 His grace unto a little ox’s stall;
 Janicola, men of that thorp him call:
 A daughter had he fair enough to sight,
 And Grisildis this youngé maiden hight.

But for to speak of virtuous beauty,
Then was she one the fairest under sun,
Full poorly yfostered up was she;
No likerous lust was in her heart yrun:
Well ofter of the well than of the tun
She drank; and for she wouldé virtue please,
She knew well labour but no idle ease.

But though this maiden tender were of age,
Yet in the breast of her virginity,
There was enclosed sad and ripe couráge,
And in great reverence and charity
Her oldé pooré father foster'd she:
A few sheep spinning on the field she kept;
She wouldé not be idle till she slept.

And when she homeward came she wouldé bring
Wortés and other herbés timés oft,
The which she shred and seeth'd for her living,
And made her bed full hard and nothing soft;
And aye she kept her father's life on loft
With every obeisance and diligence
That child may do to father's reverence.

Upon Grisild', this pooré créature,
Full often sith this marquis set his eye,
As he on hunting rode paráventure;
And when it fell that he might her espy
He not with wanton looking of folly

His eye cast on her, but in sad wise
Upon her cheer he would him oft avise;

Commending in his heart her womanhede,
And eke her virtue, passing any wight
Of so young age as well in cheer as deed:
For though the people have no great insight
In virtue, he considered full right
Her bounty, and disposed that he would
Wed her only if ever he wedden should.

The day of wedding came, but no wight can
Tellen what woman that it shouldé be,
For which marveillé wondr'd many a man,
And saiden, when they were in privity,
“ Will not our lord yet leave his vanity?
Will he not wed? Alas, alas the while!
Why will he thus himself and us beguile? ”

But nathéless this marquis hath done make
Of gemmés set in gold and in azúre
Brooches and ringés for Grisilda's sake;
And of her clothing took he the measúre,
Of a maiden alike unto her stature,
And eke of other ornamentés all
That unto such a wedding shouldé fall.

The time of undern of the samé day
Approacheth that this wedding shouldé be,

And all the palace put was in array,
Both hall and chambers, each in his degree,
Houses of office stufféd with plenty;
There may'st thou see of dainteous vitaille
That may be found as far as lasteth Itaille.

This royal marquis richély array'd,
Lordés and ladies in his company,
The which unto the feasté weren pray'd,
And of his retinue the bach'lery,
With many a sound of sundry melody,
Unto the village of the which I told
In this array the righté way they hold.

Grisild' of this (God wot) full innocent
That for her shapen was all this array,
To fetchen water at a well is went,
And cometh home as soon as e'er she may;
For well she had heard say that thilké day
The marquis shouldé wed, and if she might
She wouldé fain have seen some of that sight.

She thought, "I will with other maidens stond,
That be my fellows, in our door, and see
The marchioness, and thereto will I fond
To do at home, as soon as it may be,
The labour which that 'longeth unto me,
And then I may at leisure her behold,
If she this way unto the Castle hold."

And as she wouldé over the threshold gone,
The marquis came and 'gan her for to call ;
And she set down her water-pot anon
Beside the threshold in an ox's stall,
And down upon her knees she 'gan to fall,
And with sad countenance kneeleth still,
Till she had heard what was the lordés will.

This thoughtful marquis spake unto this maid
Full soberly, and said in this mannere ;
“ Where is your father, Grísildis ? ” he said.
And she with reverence in humble cheer
Answeréd : “ Lord, he is already here.”
And in she go'th withouten longer let
And to the marquis she her father fet.

He by the hand then took this pooré man,
And saidé thus when he him had aside ;
“ Janicola, I neither may nor can
Longer the pleasure of mine hearté hide ;
If that thou vouchésafe, what so betide ;
Thy daughter will I take, ere that I wen
As for my wife unto her livés end.


“ Thou lovest me, that wot I well certáin,
And art my faithful liegéman ybore,
And all that liketh me, I dare well sain,
It liketh thee, and 'specially therefore
Tell me that point that I have said before,
If that thou wilt unto this purpose draw,
To taken me as for thy son in law ? ”

This sudden case this man astonied so
That red he wax'd, abash'd, and all quaking
He stood; unnethes said he wordés mo,
But only thus; "Lord," quod he, "my willing
Is as ye will, nor against your liking
I will no thing, mine owen Lord so dear;
Right as you list, govérneth this mattere."

"Then will I," quod this marquis softély,
"That in thy chamber I, and thou, and she,
Have a collatió; and wot'st thou why?
For I will ask her if it her will be
To be my wife, and rule her after me?
And all this shall be done in thy presé;nce;
I will not speak out of thine audience."

And in the chamber, while they were about
The treaty, which as ye shall after hear,
The people came into the house without,
And wond'réd them in how honést mannére
Intently she kept her father dear:
But utterly Grisildis wonder might,
For never erst ne saw she such a sight.

No wonder is though that she be astonied
To see so great a guest come in that place;
She never was to none such guestés wonned,
For which she lookéd with full palé face.
But shortly forth this matter for to chace,
These are the wordés that the marquis said
To this benigné very faithful maid:



“Grisild,” he said, “ye shall well understand,
It liketh to your father and to me
That I you wed, and eke it may so stand,
As I suppose, ye will that it so be :
But these demandés ask I first (quod he)
That since it shall be done in hasty wise
Will ye assent, or ellés you avise ?

“I say this, be ye ready with good heart
To all my lust, and that I freely may,
As me best thinketh, do you laugh or smart,
And never ye to grutchen, night or day,
And eke when I say Yea, ye say not Nay,
Neither by word nor frowning countenance ?
Swear this, and here I swear our álliance.”

Wond’ring upon this thing, quaking for dread,
She saidé : “Lord, indigne and unworthy
Am I to thilk’ honóur that ye me bid,
But as ye will yourself, right so will I :
And here I swear that never willingly
In work nor thought I will you disobey
For to be dead, though me were loth to die.”

“This is enough, Grisilda mine,” quod he.
And forth he go’th with a full sober cheer
Out at the door, and after then came she,
And to the people he said in this mannére ;
“This is my wife,” quod he, “that standeth here ;
Honóureth her, and loveth her, I pray,
Who so me loveth ; there n’is no more to say.”

And for that nothing of her oldé geer
She shouldé bring into his house, he bade
That women should despoilen her right there ;
Of which these ladies weren nothing glad
To handle' her clothés wherein she was clad :
But nathéless this maiden bright of hue
From foot to head they clothéd have all new.

Her hairés have they comb'd that lay untresséd
Full rudély, and with their fingers small
A coroune on her head they have ydresséd,
And set her full of nouches great and small.
Of her array what should I make a tale?
Unneth the people' her knew for her fairness
When she transmewéd was in such richness.

This marquis hath her spouséd with a ring
Brought for the samé cause, and then her set
Upon a horse snow-white and well ambling,
And to his palace, ere he longer let,
(With joyful people that her led and met)
Conveyéd her ; and thus the day they spend
In revel till the sunné 'gan descend.

And shortly, forth this Talé for to chace,
I say that to this newé marchioness
God hath such favour sent her of his grace,
That it ne seemeth not by likeliness
That she was born and fed in rudéness,
As in a cot or in an ox's stall,
But nourish'd in an emperorés hall.

To every wight she waxen is so dear
And worshipful, that folk there she was bore,
And from her birthé knew her year by year,
Unnethes trowéd they, but durst have swore
That to Janicle', of which I spake before,
She daughter n'as; for as by cónjecture
Them thought she was another créature.

For though that ever virtuous was she,
She was encreaséd in such excellence
Of thewés good, yset in high bounty,
And so discreet, and fair of eloquence,
So bénign, and so digne of reverence,
And couldé so the peoples' heart embrace,
That each her lov'th that looketh on her face.

Not only of Salúces in the town
Publishéd was the bounty of her name,
But eke beside in many a región;
If one saith well, another saith the same:
So spreadeth of her high bounty the fame,
That men and women, young as well as old,
Gone to Salúces upon her to behold.

Thus Walter lowly, nay but royally,
Wedded with fortunáte honesteté,
In Goddés peace liveth full easily
At home, and grace enough outward had he:
And for he saw that under low degree
Was honest virtue hid, the people' him held
A prudent man, and that is seen full seld.

Not only this Grisildis through her wit
Could all the feat of wifely homeliness,
But eke when that the case requiréd it,
The common profit couldé she redress :
Thére n'as discord, rancóur, or heaviness,
In all the land that she ne could appease,
And wisely bring them all in heartés ease.

Though that her husband absent were or non
If gentlemen or other of that country
Were wroth, she wouldé bringen them at one.
So wise and ripé wordés haddé she,
And judgément of so great equity,
That she from heaven sent was, as men ween'd
People to save, and every wrong to' amend.





